MINUTES OF 10th OCTOBER 2018, EDGECLIFFE ROOM 104

Present:

Elizabeth Ashford, Derek Ball, Aaron Cotnoir, Adam Etinson, Audrey Horsburgh (Secretary), Berys Gaut, Patrick Greenough, James Harris (Head of Department), Katherine Hawley, Tomas Higginson (Student Rep, 4th Year), Lisa Jones (Director of Teaching), Renee Langenhuijsen (Conversion Diploma Rep), Michelle Marsh (Student Rep, 1st Year), Ryan Miller (Mature Student Rep), Rachel Neighbour (Student Rep, 2nd Year), Papa Obeng (Student Rep, 2nd Year), Simon Prosser, Walter Pedriali, Sophia Rommel (Philosophy School President & Convenor), Ben Sachs, Kevin Scharp, Tristan Skinner (Student Rep, 3rd Year), Justin Snedegar, James Spoehel (Student Rep, 1st Year), Jens Timmermann. Kyle Van Oosterum (Student Rep, 3rd Year).

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1. Apologies for Absence

Sarah Brodie, Antonino Falduto, Katherine Moulton (Student Rep, Senior Honours), James Skinner (Student Rep, MLitt).

2. Minutes of the Philosophy Staff/Student Liaison Committee meeting held on 21 February 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2018 were approved.

3. Matters arising from the above minutes

The Director of Teaching drew the Committee’s attention to the action plan at the end of the previous minutes. All actions have been completed, not strictly to the timescales dictated. The SASP ‘apply to PhD’ workshop is being organised for this semester and the Conversion Diploma Coordinator role has been appointed.

The Chair (and Student President) informed the committee that a new structure for the minutes is being implemented. The aim is to clarify the main issues, discussions, solution and when this will be met/completed for the next meeting’s minutes. This will hopefully direct conversation and clarify outcomes.

Staff Business:

4. Director of Teaching (Preliminary Notes)
The Director of Teaching noted there was no specific staff business raised. She extended her thanks to all the class reps for taking on these important roles, and emphasised the importance of closing the feedback loop after the meeting, to assure students that we are following up on their comments. The minutes will go on the departmental website, but it might also be helpful for the class reps to informally feed back the actions/outcomes to the students taking the modules.

**ACTION:** The Student President will also put the minutes in the weekly emails so they accessible to all students.

**Student Business:**

5. **MLitt Report**

5.1 Report by MLitt Rep

As the MLitt Rep was absent from the meeting, the MLitt report was read out by the School President. It provided student feedback on all S1 core and optional modules, including all streams of the Research Methods module. The feedback was largely positive, with some negative points that will be taken up by staff.

**ACTION:** The MLitt report will be sent to Jens Timmermann as Director of the MLitt programme to allow him to follow up any points made with individual lecturers.

6. **Conversion Diploma Report**

6.1 Report by Conversion Diploma Rep

The Conversion Diploma Rep reported the general feedback from Conversion Diploma Students was very positive. Students acknowledged that there was a lot of work, but it was doable and found the induction very helpful. The feedback suggested having a reading list at the start of the semester particularly to assist with the lack of background knowledge for Conversion Dip students.

**ACTION:** The Conversion Diploma Rep’s Report will be sent to the Conversion Diploma Coordinator.

The Conversion Diploma Coordinator thanked the rep for her report and found the feedback extremely useful as well as the positive reaction to the Induction. In reply to the suggestion of a Reading List, he is working on this for next semester (mentioned in agenda item 3) and is hoping to produce something a little more ambitious than a basic reading list.

It was suggested by another member of staff that the feedback from the Conversion Diploma students on specific modules might not be anonymous, as this is a small cohort.

**ACTION:** The Student President will include the Conversion Diploma student’s feedback on specific modules in the particular Honours/Sub-Honours module reports for the next meeting.
7. Mature Student Report

7.1 Report by Mature Student Rep

The Mature Student Rep presented a brief report. He commented on the difficulty of contacting mature students for feedback, explaining there is no clear list of such students available from the department/registry.

From the students he did hear back from, there were no specific concerns however more general feedback highlighted concerns around university resources as most mature students are commuting students. Students suggested that some general info e.g. location of study spaces, communal area, the ASC etc., would be helpful to have.

**ACTION:** The Student President will feed this back at the next Education Committee and contact the Union to see if there is information like this available to pass on to the Mature Student Rep.

8. Honours Report

8.1 PY3100 Reading Philosophy 1: Texts in Language, Logic, Mind, Epistemology, Metaphysics and Science: Students enjoy the seminar structure, as it allows everyone to participate. The reading is deemed interesting and students feel as though they are learning tools to engage deeply with texts. Some students find the background readings unhelpful for providing context for the texts. Thus, there is a general interest in being provided with brief background lectures/short summary sheets each week, especially to aid understanding.

The Junior Honours Class Rep reported on the module.

The PY3100 module coordinator responded to the feedback given. He explained that there are 5 staff members teaching this module and this is the 3rd year this module has run. The structure was rejigged after last year’s feedback and the Seminar Coordinators are happy with the way this is working; however they acknowledge there is a rigid structure to fit the teaching into the class hour. There were some presentation guidelines delivered in week one that it was suggested the students revisit.

The Module Coordinator addressed the comment on background reading, taking note to investigate this in more detail. He understands this being a problem in week 1 but the readings are selected to be relevant as possible. This will be considered when planning next year’s module and will also be looked into for the PY3200 second semester readings.

Another Seminar Coordinator added that the differences in the difficulty-level of the readings are considered when marking the weekly presentations.

**ACTION:** – Module Coordinator will email all PY3100 students encouraging them to get in touch if they are having any difficulties with the readings.

8.2 PY4618 Animals, Minds, Language: The lecturer is really clear at explaining things and provides excellent handouts. The Moodle discussion element is useful and students like the module’s presentation aspect. Students suggest that there could be more PowerPoint/board
use, and some students do not know what to expect when it comes to reading animal case studies/scientific papers in detail.

The Student President reported, on behalf of Senior Honours Class Rep, on module PY4618.

The Module Coordinator addressed the feedback presented. As mentioned in the course guidelines, he will ensure students have appropriate guidance before scientific papers are introduced to the module.

In response to the feedback relating to PowerPoint and visual aids, he explained that this module is comprised of a small group and he has mixed feeling about the effectiveness of this over discussion. He will discuss this further with the group.

8.3 PY4639 Philosophy of Creativity: Lectures handouts are very useful, readings are engaging and the lecturer seems very knowledgeable. Students would prefer slightly more structured tutorial discussions. A somewhat unclear path of progression throughout the semester has been noted. Students also suggest that essays would be a more appropriate form of assessment, perhaps enabling there to be no exam, only submitting coursework (essays) instead.

The Student President reported, on behalf of Senior Honours Class Rep, on module PY4639.

In response to the feedback reported, the PY4639 Module Coordinator explained there had been one structured tutorial and one more open-ended to vary with the content on the module. To address the comments on the path of progression, he added that the opening lecture explained the topics in the module and how they built on each other.

ACTION: The Module Coordinator will upload the opening lecture on MMS so students can refer back to this if they are unclear of the module’s path of progression.

He also acknowledged that the Essays vs. Exam debate is something that is reviewed every year across many departments in the University. There are pros and cons to both but he highlighted that an exam requires students to write on 3 subjects, rather than just the one topic for an essay, and thus it ensures some breadth of learning.

8.4 PY4644 Rousseau on Human Nature, Society, and Freedom: The lecturer is very good at explaining concepts and his handouts are good – students are generally happy. However, it is not always made clear how the secondary readings relate to the course’s broader themes. The new presentations are found to be very tough because readings are difficult; the lecturer has told students that this is the first year he has assessed the presentations and the students believe that it shows.

The Senior Honours Class Rep reported on module PY4644.

The Module Coordinator for PY4644 addressed the feedback reported by the Class Rep. He explained that the secondary readings relate to the week’s seminar and are explained by the end of discussion. These are the same secondary readings as have been set in previous years.

He asked for more information from the class rep about the comments on presentations, as he has already provided the students with a breakdown of how they are being assessed. The class rep expanded by saying the main anxieties came from 2 different angles; interruptions and
secondary material. The Director of Teaching suggested feeding back to the class that the presentations so far have been good, which will give the students a structure/expectation to follow.

8.5 PY4648 Conceptual Engineering and its Role in Philosophy: Students find the material interesting and commend the teaching; they love that two lecturers teach simultaneously, as they offer different perspectives and clarify each other’s points. However, students worry that lectures are moving too slowly, as lots of catching up has to be done at the start of each lecture. Some students expressed a desire to have more information given at the start of the semester about their final essays.

The Junior Honours Class Rep reported on module PY4648.

The PY4648 Module Coordinator compared the comments to a previous year’s feedback where the students thought there were too many case studies. He explained that the last time PY4648 ran it became very interactive which unfortunately slows down the pace of the lectures/seminars. This is however one of the attractive features of the course.

The Coordinator continued by adding that information on the final essay is given in the first session and that the case studies become clearer as semester unfolds. There are one or two more case studies in the in next few weeks, Dr Greenough will check in with class afterwards and reassure students to come to him with any difficulties.

8.6 PY4650 Philosophy, Feminism, and Gender: Very positive feedback, overall. Lecturers are excellent, readings are extensive and contemporary, and the module’s participatory nature is exciting. However, most students find the seminars too big, and also find that readings need to be dealt with in greater detail in seminars (it was noted that the lecturer does not add to the assigned readings). Students request guidance for presentations.

The Junior Honours Class Rep reported on module PY4650.

Two lecturers teach on this module together. They saw the feedback before the meeting and one lecturer was able to discuss some of the issues with the students in today’s seminars. She explained that the module was more popular than expected and they were unfortunately unable to put on a 3rd seminar group due to teaching workload constraints. But the lecturers plan to break down the seminar groups into smaller groups for discussion.

The lecturer continued by addressing the feedback on the presentations, which have so far been good. She will inform the students of this and remind them that the presentations are not being assessed. She wasn’t aware the readings were an issue and asked the student rep if any specific authors were mentioned.

ACTION: The class rep will send the compiled report to the lecturers for them to look into the issue further.

8.7 PY4652 Philosophy of Human Rights: Lecturers are engaging, content is very interesting and the readings are diverse and appropriate. However, readings are also viewed as being too difficult, dense and numerous. More lecture structure is needed, with lecture content explicitly related to the readings. The use of visual aids PowerPoints/board is widely requested and students would appreciate more advice on how to write “first class essays”.

5
The Junior Honours Class Rep reported on module PY4652.

The Module Coordinator thanked the students for the feedback. She is hoping there will be more continuity/structure for the rest of the semester as she is delivering the rest of the lectures herself. She explained that with a class of 43 it is hard to make teaching interactive but she can try to include more visual aids in her lectures. Essay advice will also be provided.

8.8 PY4657 Philosophy and Economics: The materials are generally well received. However, there are lots of complaints about the module being too technical for some philosophers.

The Senior Honours Class Rep reported on module PY4657.

The PY4657 Module Coordinator addressed the feedback reported by the class rep. He asked whether the material students are struggling with is being delivered by himself or the Economics lecturers. If the latter, this is somewhat inevitable; however he wished to reassure students that assignments will be based on Philosophy of Economics and not Economics. This module is advertised for students with no background knowledge of Economics and he will pay attention to the content to ensure that this is being assumed.

He continued on this subject saying the first few weeks of teaching has been on methodology so most of the technical content is behind them.

8.9 PY4701 Philosophy and Pedagogy: No feedback collected.

The Director of Teaching noted there is currently one student on this module and that it is conducted on a supervision basis, without traditional teaching.

9. Second Year Report

9.1 PY2010 Intermediate Logic: Students find the lecturers and tutors very engaging and helpful. Handouts and PowerPoints are well organized, MMS resources are comprehensive and the logic surgeries are incredibly helpful. Many students only provided positive feedback, although some note that examples in lectures are sometimes skipped over too fast. Students would appreciate more non-compulsory practice questions. Putting all example classes in one day has been labelled an inconvenience, especially as some example classes clash with the lecturer’s office hours.

ACTION: The PY2010 Module Coordinator will change his office hours.

He added that the textbook for readings has plenty of exercises in it, he can send round a reminder to students about this. Lectures can also include fewer examples that can be explained at a slower pace.

9.2 PY2011 Foundations of Western Philosophy: Students find the lecturer explains concepts very clearly, but believe that lectures would be greatly improved with slides/some kind of visual aid, as it is currently difficult to follow the lectures’ structure. Students appreciate the plans for each week, which are uploaded on MMS. Readings are seen as slightly overwhelming and some students find there to be too much to read in one week.

The PY2011 Module Coordinator acknowledged the feedback.
10. First Year Report

10.1 PY1010 Mind and World: Both the material and the lecturers make the module consistently engaging and clear, the lecture slides are highly detailed and students very much value Panopto. Some difficult concepts are glossed over quite quickly and too many interruptions with off-topic questions have been noted. Students would appreciate help with tutorial preparation and find some tutorials to not be providing the encouragement needed to engage in philosophical discussion.

Three lecturers collectively teach on this module. The Module Coordinator acknowledged there is a huge amount of content covered in this modules. Student questions during lectures was discussed. The Coordinator suggested limiting students to one question per lecture or having an opportunity to ask questions at the end of lectures to avoid interruption. The second year class rep agreed, adding that questions for clarification rather than discussion can be helpful during lectures.

The staff teaching on this module asked what sort of help with tutorial preparation students would find helpful. The second year class rep suggested the feedback was centred on confidence in tutorials explaining some students are not ready to engage in discussion as the atmosphere can be tense.

One of the module lecturers suggested that the tutors can help with this, however some are more inexperienced than others. The Director of Teaching suggested that the Module Coordinator can liaise with all the tutors on this, as this is something everyone can work on together.

10.2 PY1011 Moral and Political Controversies: Very positive feedback, with Prof. Mulgan celebrated as a great lecturer and professor. Specifically, his delivery and explanations make the subject feel more accessible and students really look forward to his lecturers. However, quite a number of students find the subject too broad and the jumps between applied ethics, ethical theory, and normative ethics confusing. Not knowing what the final exam’s structure will be also disconcerts most students. Too many explanation on examples, explained but then explained further.

The Module Coordinator for PY1011 addressed the feedback, explaining that this module contains a lot of broad intro-level content. The connection between the different levels of ethics was explained in the initial lecture, however more would be said about this at Friday’s upcoming lecture. There is also information about the exam structure in the module outline and there are previous exam papers online. The Module Coordinator can remind students that this information is available if helpful.

11. Evening Degree Report

11.1 Nothing to report. The Evening Degree student rep will send feedback to the School President if anything arises.
12. Equality and Diversity

Prof. Katherine Hawley introduced herself as the Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee for the school, encouraging class reps to voice any concerns or positive suggestions to herself. The Student President noted there were no issues in feedback. Prof Hawley referred to 11.1 in the previous minutes, satisfied from the feedback that these issues have been resolved.

The Student President welcomed any feedback re. Equality and Diversity should any concerns arise. Her office hours are every Thursday from 4pm-5pm, held at the Rector’s Café.

13. MATTERS FOR NOTING

Minutes will be published online and circulated by the Student President to the student body.

13.1 Date of the next meeting: 20th February 2019

Audrey Horsburgh
Departmental Secretary
14 October 2018
### MINUTES OF 10 OCTOBER 2018

#### ACTION LIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Student President</td>
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